

September 9, 2008

Rebecca Dreilinger (202) 225-8203

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**(Washington DC)** *Today, the Iowa Attorney General announced that five executives of the Agriprocessors meatpacking plant, including its owner, have been charged with a total of 9,311 child labor violations, involving 32 youths under the age of 18. Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) met with laborers from the plant, including women and children, this past May in Postville. In the following statement, Gutierrez said:*

Today's announcement by Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller is a victory in a town that has been robbed of justice for too long. I applaud the Attorney General's leadership and that of Congressman Bruce Braley.

This past May, I sat down with workers at the plant — children who worked overtime at the expense of their health and schoolwork, women who were demanded to perform sexual acts for better hours or a better wage, and men who lost limbs to a reckless disregard of safety standards. We now know as fact what those workers had earnestly professed, that the accused knowingly exploited undocumented workers and children. Yet, the first to be punished were not the employers, but those who worked the longest hours, in the worst conditions, for meager pay. Those workers were not threats to their community, and they did not threaten the livelihood of parents and children or rob them of workplace safety. Yet, the workers were the first to be targeted by the Bush Administration.

As these criminals are held accountable for their actions against children, let us not forget the 1,800 workers who remain at Agriprocessors and whose safety lies in the balance each day. It

is my hope that, in the future, the federal government will step up to the task of protecting workers, rather than ripping families apart and prohibiting mothers and father from being able to feed their children.

Additionally, charges of this volume and magnitude should serve as a signal to our government that interruption of a labor investigation, for any purpose, can potentially interfere with ensuring the safety of workers. In Postville, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) implemented a never-before-seen show of force in executing immigration raids. This Congress has an obligation to determine if this raid in any way delayed the safeguarding of children at Agriprocessors.

###